

## Abstract

**THESIS:** Effects of a Modern Environment on Early Puberty in Humans: A Comparative Study of Skeletal and Published Data of Non-Hispanic Blacks in the United States  
**STUDENT:** Mari K. Poulos  
**DEGREE:** Master of Arts  
**COLLEGE:** Sciences and Humanities  
**DATE:** December 2009  
**PAGES:** 306

Studies in the United States suggest that girls are developing secondary sexual characteristics at earlier ages than in previous years, with non-Hispanic black girls in the United States experiencing menarche at an earlier age when compared to their peers. Early puberty and menarche may have multiple detrimental effects, including reduced adult height, increased risk of breast cancer, obesity, and endometrial cancer. In this thesis, data from published sources of height and skeletal information on non-Hispanic blacks dating from 1763 to 1861 in the United States are compared with modern population data from 1988 to 1994. The expected result is that the modern population should be taller than the historic population. This held true for males, but not for females. The sexes differed from each other in each population group. This could suggest that female maturation is under greater genetic control than male, compensating for harsh living conditions.